

Zadok Magruder

A founding father of Montgomery County, Revolutionary War officer, and enslaver of a relatively large number of people for his time period

Zadok Magruder (1729–1811), namesake of Col. Zadok Magruder High School in Derwood, served in the American Revolution as a colonel in the Maryland Militia. Beforehand, in 1774, he had been among other influential men who issued the Hungerford Resolves, calling for an end to trade with Britain in the wake of the Boston Tea Party as “the most effectual means for the securing of American Freedom.” (Others involved, including Thomas Sprigg Wootton, were primarily well-to-do businessmen and large landowners—most of them enslavers as well.) The declaration, named for the Rockville tavern where it was drafted, was a risky, early expression of resistance to the motherland.

Magruder was subsequently elected to the first Maryland Convention in Annapolis—which functioned as an extralegal, provincial government—and was then chosen by the body to represent Maryland at the First Continental Congress, convened as part of the lead-up to the Revolution. The Maryland Convention also adopted “The Articles of Association of the Freemen of Maryland”—a successor provisional government—and Magruder was selected as one of its leaders. After Montgomery County was formed in 1776, Magruder was chosen with six others to organize its new government. Through these varied roles, he played a pivotal part in the formation of both the state of Maryland as well as the new nation and is considered one of the founding fathers of the county.

A member of a family that had rapidly risen to prominence in Montgomery County since immigrating three generations earlier in the mid-1600s, he inherited about 600 acres of land as well as “one negro man and one negro boy” when he was 20. Reflecting his wealth, around 1750 he built a large brick house that stands on Muncaster Road as one of the county’s oldest extant residences. Over time he acquired more land—approximately doubling his acreage—and more enslaved people. The first national census in 1790, shown here, lists 26, putting him in the upper four percent of enslavers in the county at that time. (Only 25 other residents held as many or more enslaved people.)

Magruder provided wool from sheep raised on his property to make blankets and clothing for soldiers fighting with George Washington at Valley Forge. He also contributed money for arms and ammunition. (Beyond this, his actual military service in the war is uncertain, other than guarding and transferring prisoners.)

Resident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
Col. Zadok Magruder	1	415	693	20	27	47	1075																			26	
Benjamin Roman	1	2	3				6																				
John Helms	1	1	4				1																				
Zadok Magruder	1	2	3				6																				

His home, called the Ridge, is located approximately three miles due north of the Derwood high school named for him. A small well-preserved log outbuilding on the property is said to be the sole survivor of dwellings that once housed the enslaved. Col. Zadok Magruder High School opened in 1970, the same year as Thomas S. Wootton High School, named for his Revolutionary War–era contemporary.

Main sources:

Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1776–1976*, 1976

US Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, “The Ridge,” <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M;%2022-15.pdf>